

ascomycetous fungi. To persons forming collections of our indigenous fungi, Mr. Phillips's fasciculi will be useful, since similar collections have hitherto principally comprised only the *Hymenomycetes*. Mr. Phillips will be assisted by various well-known mycologists, and he proposes to issue a very limited number of copies at twelve shillings each fasciculus of fifty species.

M. Amédée Guillemin has published through Hachette a very interesting work on Comets, profusely illustrated. All the modern theories are discussed, from Descartes to Schiaparelli, a number of traditions and stories connected with comets being also introduced.

WE omitted to mention in last week's notice of the anniversary meeting of the French Academy the speech delivered by M. Dumas on De la Rive. It is a part of the duty of the perpetual secretaries to deliver such *éloges* at each anniversary meeting. That duty has been performed by each perpetual secretary from Fontenelle to our days, and the collection of these *éloges* is an important part of the Academical publications. M. Bertrand is at present engaged in preparing the *éloge* of M. Elie de Beaumont, which will be delivered in 1876.

A COMMISSION, nominated by the Geographical Society of Paris, and composed of Admiral Fluriot de Langle, MM. Delesse, Charles Gradi, H. Farry, and Jules Girard, has just published some instructions to navigators to aid in their study of the physical geography of the sea. These instructions, which the Society sends gratuitously to everyone who is willing to turn to account, in the interest of science, his stay on board ship, point out, in a style sufficiently precise and elementary to come within the comprehension of all, the principal points on which observations should be made, and the best methods to be adopted for collecting useful particulars.

AT St. Peter's College, Cambridge, on April 6, there will be an examination for a Natural Science Scholarship. The subjects of examination will be botany, chemistry and chemical physics, geology, and comparative anatomy and physiology. No candidate will be examined in more than two of the above-mentioned subjects. Applications to become candidates must be made on or before March 29 to the Rev. J. Porter, tutor of the College, who will give all necessary information.

By the death of Prof. William Macdonald, of St. Andrew's University, the chair known as that of "Civil and Natural History" becomes vacant. Dr. Macdonald held it for twenty-four years. The post has from the first been practically a sinecure, and almost seems to have been instituted for the sake of the professor. We wonder if the Senate of St. Andrew's will allow their University to be befooled by the appointment of a successor to Dr. Macdonald in this unique chair of "Civil and Natural History."

WE are glad to see that it is intended to form a society at Watford, having for its object the investigation of the meteorology, geology, botany, and zoology (including entomology, ornithology, &c.) of the neighbourhood, and the dissemination amongst its members of information on natural history and microscopical science. The evening meetings of the society will be held (by permission) in the rooms of the Watford Public Library, and during the summer months field meetings will also be held. It is proposed that the annual subscription be ten shillings, without entrance fee. The names of ladies and gentlemen willing to join the society will be received by Dr. Brett, Watford House, by Mr. Arthur Cottam, St. John's Road, Watford, and by Mr. John Hopkinson, jun., Holly Bank, Watford. It is hoped that a sufficient number of names will be received within the next few days to warrant a meeting being called to found the society in the course of the present month.

THE Institution of Civil Engineers seems to be one of the most prosperous of our scientific societies. On its books on Nov. 30, 1874, were 2,130 members; its income for the past year was upwards of 10,000*l.*, and its investments amount to nearly 33,000*l.*

A RARE phenomenon, says the *Malta Times*, occurred in the forenoon of Monday, the 21st ult. During a strong wind from the south-west, which had prevailed for two days previously, the sea suddenly rose several feet and flooded the moles and roads surrounding the harbours, causing four or five steamers, moored between the Custom House and Calcara Rise, to snap their stern hawsers like packthreads, and carrying away boats that were hauled ashore in the French and other creeks. The sea then receded as suddenly as it rose, leaving portions of the bottom of the harbour exposed, upon which men and boys might be seen collecting fish and other marine animals that had been left aground by the retiring water. Shortly afterwards the sea resumed its ordinary level. Similar phenomena have been noticed occasionally during the course of many years.

M. W. DE FONVIELLE has published a small volume, "Le Métre International définitif," giving an account of the determination of the metre and the negotiations relating to it from 1789 to 1874.

THE *Daily News* of Monday has a letter from its correspondent on board the *Challenger*, giving a few details in addition to those contained in the recent *Times*' letter. From Hong Kong the ship was to return to Manila and other places, as far as New Guinea, then make for Yokohama, Japan.

THERE was a slight shock of earthquake at Malta on Friday last, at 1 P.M.

THE additions to the Zoological Society's Gardens during the past week include two Razor-billed Curassows (*Mitua tuberosa*) and a Yarrell's Curassow (*Crax carunculata*) from South America, presented by Mrs. A. E. Nash; seven Golden Agoutis (*Dasyprocta aguti*), from Guiana; five Guira Cuckoos (*Guira guira*) from Para; an Ani (*Crotophaga ani*), two Orinoco Geese (*Chenalopex jubatus*), two Red-tailed Guans (*Ortalis ruficanda*), a Spotted Cavy (*Ca'ogenys paca*), and a Collared Peccary (*Docotyles tajacu*), all from South America, purchased.

#### THE PRESENT CONDITION OF THE ROYAL SOCIETY\*

(Extracted from the President's Address at the Anniversary Meeting.)

*Committee of Papers.*—The strength of the Society being represented by its publications, the Committee of Papers is the one whose functions are unquestionably the highest and most onerous, as they are the most closely scrutinised by the Fellows and the public.

Every member of the Council is included in this committee, which meets after almost every Council meeting, and no part of its duties is at present performed by a sub-committee. It appears to me to be very doubtful whether this arrangement, even if the best, can last, owing to the greatly increased number of papers now communicated and their augmenting bulk, and to the value of their contents being less easily estimated as the subjects of scientific research become more specialised. As it is, in the majority of cases but few of the members present can judge of the merits of many of the papers; and it is not easy after a protracted Council meeting, and one occupied with promiscuous business, to fix the attention of a large committee upon subjects with which but few members present may be familiar. It is true that the committee is aided in all cases by the written opinions of careful and impartial referees, and by the special attainments of our secretaries, and that it is most desirable that the sometimes divergent opinions of these should be weighed by

\* Continued from p. 178.

others as well as by experts in the subjects of the papers. But for all this a committee of the whole Council is not necessary ; and though I should not be disposed to advocate a return to a system once pursued of resolving the committee into sub-committees charged with special subjects, I think it possible that some other plan may meet the difficulties of the case and relieve our overburdened Council of much labour. A possible plan for relieving both the Council and the committee, while securing as careful a scrutiny of the papers as we now have, would be a division of the labours of the committee, and an addition of extra members to its number, chosen from among the Fellows, who should continue in office throughout the session. This, or some plan of the kind, would have the advantage of engaging more of the Fellows than at present in the affairs of the Society ; and I feel sure that so responsible a position as that of Extra member of the Committee of Papers would be accepted with pride by those Fellows who are most competent to discharge the duties.

It seems convenient to refer here to suggestions that have been made to me as to the expediency of breaking up our transactions or proceedings, or both, into sections devoted to physics and biology respectively, or even subdividing them still more. This separation has been advocated on the ground that science has become so specialised that no scientific man can grasp all its subdivisions, that the mixed publications are cumbersome and difficult to consult, and that private libraries are now overburdened with the publications of Societies, of each of which a small part would suffice for all their possessors' wants. There is no question that this, if now an evil, will soon become intolerable, for our publications increase rapidly in number of contributions and in their bulk. There are, however, so many considerations to be discussed before any system of relief can be adopted, that I confine myself to stating the subject as it has been urged upon me.

The Society's library now comprehends 36,270 volumes and 10,000 tracts, the most considerable collection of scientific works in the possession of any private body ; and in respect of Transactions and Proceedings of scientific academies, societies, and institutions, I believe it is unrivalled among public bodies.

A complete Catalogue of the Scientific Books, MSS., and Letters, which I regret to say is unaccompanied by any historical or other information regarding the library, was printed in 1839. Another catalogue of the miscellaneous literature and letters was printed in 1841 ; and there is also a MSS. catalogue of maps, charts, engravings, and drawings, which number upwards of 5,000.

For some years past the Library Committee, indefatigable in steady endeavour, have greatly increased the value and efficiency of our library ; and in 1873, previous to leaving old Burlington House for our present apartments, it ordered a rearrangement of the whole, and the preparation of a new catalogue, which is being proceeded with as fast as the current duties of the officers will permit.

In the mean time the Catalogue of Transactions and Journals is printed for working purposes, and will be added to until such time as the general catalogue is ready for press.

The collection of Oriental MSS. presented by Sir William Jones in 1792, and added to by his widow in 1797, was largely consulted by several of the distinguished foreigners who assembled at the Oriental Congress in London last September. From conversation with some of these gentlemen, I learnt that the collection contains many documents of the greatest value and rarity, together with some that are unique ; and it may be worth the consideration of the Council, whether they would not be more useful if transferred to, or deposited in, the India Office or some other Oriental library, where they would be consulted to greater advantage than here. At present they occupy part of the room devoted to our archives.

The two most noteworthy additions to the library during the past year have been the MSS. on logic and mathematics of our late fellow Prof. Boole, presented by his widow ; and Dr. Fayer's collection of forty-seven original drawings of the poisonous snakes of India, which are of interest in connection with his and Dr. Brunton's experiments on snake-poisons, printed in our "Proceedings."

The apartments devoted to the library afford space for twenty years' addition at the present rate of increase ; they are remarkably commodious ; and those who assembled at our Soirée last spring and saw them for the first time lighted up and decorated will consider with me that they are not only a noble suite of

apartments, but that they are in keeping with the purposes and the high position of the Society.

You are aware that the Council resolved that the Catalogue of Scientific Papers should be continued through the decade 1864-1873. This work is now progressing under direction of the Library Committee, who have had charge of the undertaking from the commencement. The necessary funds are granted by a vote of the Council, and we may hope, in the course of the coming year, that the seventh volume of this important work will be ready for publication ; and we confidently trust that the Government will extend its liberality by printing this as it did the former volumes of the series. The total outlay upon the six volumes already published (which comprise papers published between 1800 and 1863) has been 8,936*l.* 12*s.*, of which 3,720*l.* 15*s.* 6*d.* (the cost of preparation) was defrayed by the Society, and the rest (the cost of printing, paper, and binding) by the Treasury ; against which must be set the proceeds of sale, repaid to the Treasury in occasional amounts, the last within the present year, making a total amount of 1,000*l.*

The number of copies of the Society's Transactions distributed gratuitously to institutions and individuals not Fellows of the Society is now 209, and of the Proceedings 325.

*House Committee.*—The great labours of this committee in connection with the removal into the apartments we now occupy had not terminated at the beginning of the past session ; and various matters have still to be attended to. That the arrangements the committee has made have given satisfaction to the Fellows at large has been amply acknowledged. We are, indeed, greatly indebted to them for the knowledge, experience, and time, all so freely given in our service, as also to the knowledge of our requirements and the practical views of our Assistant Secretary, upon whom fell the duty of suggesting the best disposition of the apartments throughout this large and commodious building. Lastly, I would beg your permission to record the services of the eminent architect, Mr. Barry, who has throughout shown the greatest regard to our position and requirements, and but for whose professional ability enlisted in our service we might have found ourselves as ill as we are now well accommodated.

*Funds and Bequests.*—*The Donation Fund.*—In 1828 our former President, Dr. Wollaston, invested 2,000*l.* in the Three per Cents for the creation of a fund, the dividends from which were to be expended liberally "from time to time in promoting experimental researches, or in rewarding those by whom such researches have been made, or in such other manner as shall appear to the President and Council for the time being most conducive to the interests of the Society in particular, or of science in general." There is no restriction as regards nationality : but members of Council are excluded from participation during their term of office.

To this fund many liberal additions were made. Mr. Davies Gilbert gave 1,000*l.* ; Warburton, Hatchett, Guilleard, and Chantrey each contributed 100 guineas. From these gifts, and by accumulations, the fund in 1849 had increased to 5,293*l.* With subsequent contributions, and a bequest of 500*l.* by our eminent Fellow the late Sir Francis Ronalds, the total, as shown by the balance-sheet now in your hands, amounts to 5,816*l.* 1*s.* 1*d.* In addition to the balance-sheet already referred to, a detailed statement of grants from the Donation Fund is, in accordance with a resolution of Council, published with the Report of the Anniversary Meeting.

Sir Francis Ronalds died in 1873 ; his bequest (reduced by payment of legacy duty to 450*l.*) was made, as declared in his will, in recognition of the advantages he had derived when Honorary Director of the Observatory at Kew, from the sums granted to him out of the fund to aid him in the construction of his photographic apparatus for the registration of terrestrial magnetism, atmospheric electricity, and other meteorological phenomena.

Of the grants made during the past session, I would especially mention 100*l.* to Dr. Dohrn in support of the Stazione Zoologica at Naples, in which two British naturalists, Mr. Lankester and Mr. Balfour, have recently made a valuable series of observations on marine animals.

Among the others were a grant of 25*l.* to Dr. Carpenter for the purpose of constructing an apparatus to illustrate the theory of oceanic circulation in relation to temperature, and 50*l.* in aid of the Sub-Wealden Exploration. In reference to this last, I should remark that, in recognition of the important scientific results which have been obtained from the Sub-Wealden

boring (which is now carried to a depth of 1,000 feet), and in view of obtaining further assistance from her Majesty's Government towards the work, the Council authorised me to lay before the Chancellor of the Exchequer such a statement as I should judge appropriate, with the object of obtaining a grant from the public purse in aid of the boring.

In pursuance of this resolution, I joined the Presidents of the Geological Society and of the Institution of Civil Engineers in presenting a memorial, which was most favourably received, and was answered by a promise on the part of the Treasury of 100/- for every 100 feet of boring that should be accomplished, down to a depth of 2,000 feet.

The Government Grant (of 1,000/- per annum) continues to be expended with satisfactory results. I must refer you to the report which will be published in our Proceedings for the statement of the grants, making, however, special allusion to Dr. Klein's work on the Anatomy of the Lymphatic System, towards which 100/- from this fund was granted, and by means of which copies have been distributed to the best advantage in this country and abroad.

The Scientific-Relief Fund slowly augments, and has been of the greatest service. It is almost unique among charities in costing nothing in the working, and in being inaccessible to direct or indirect canvassing. The amount hitherto expended in relief since its establishment has been 2,240/-, extended to fifty-two individuals or families.

The Gilchrist Trust.—One of the most munificent bequests ever made in the interest of science is that of the late Dr. Borthwick Gilchrist, a retired Indian medical officer, well known as the author of the "Grammar of Hindostani."

Dr. Gilchrist was an intimate friend of Dr. Birkbeck, Joseph Hume, Sir John Bowring, and others of the advanced Liberals of fifty years ago, and took part in the establishment of the "London University," now University College. He died in 1841, leaving his large fortune to be devoted, after his wife's death, to "the benefit, advancement, and propagation of education and learning in every part of the world, as circumstances permit," the trustees having an "absolute and uncontrolled discretion" as to the mode of applying it. The income of the Trust, which is being gradually augmented by the sale of building-lots at Sydney, where Dr. Gilchrist had invested a considerable sum in the purchase of an estate with a view to its ultimate rather than its immediate productiveness, now amounts to about 4,000/- per annum. The trustees have created various scholarships for bringing young men of ability from India and the colonies to carry on their education in this country; and they have also given assistance to various educational institutions which they considered to have a claim for occasional help from the fund, such as the Working Men's College in London and the Edinburgh School of Arts; and they have instituted short courses of scientific lectures to working men in London, Manchester, Leeds, and Liverpool.

The trustees now desire to do something effectual for the advancement of learning; and a scheme—subsequently submitted to the Council of the Royal Society—was suggested by Dr. Carpenter, the secretary of the Trust, as one which seemed to him to be the most effectual for carrying out this object; and it was adopted by the trustees on his recommendation.

In a letter addressed to myself in June last, Dr. Carpenter informed your Council that the trustees of the fund had resolved to employ a portion of it in the promotion of scientific research, and empowered him to submit the following liberal proposal to the consideration of your Council: namely, the trustees propose annually to entertain the question of placing 1,000/- at the disposal of the Council of the Royal Society to be expended in grants to men of proved ability in scientific research, but who, from their limited pecuniary means, are precluded from prosecuting inquiries of great interest by the necessity of devoting to remunerative work the time they would wish to devote to such inquiries; the Council of the Society to undertake on their part to recommend to the trustees suitable subjects of inquiry, competent men circumstanced as indicated, and the sum to be assigned in each case. The trustees desire, further, that the grants should not be regarded as eleemosynary, but rather as studentships carrying with them scientific distinction, and not as rewards for past work, but as means for work to be done.

Upon this communication (in which you cannot fail to perceive not only an enlightened regard for the interests of science on the part of the trustees, but, on the part of their secretary, an accurate perception of the best means of supplying one of

the greatest scientific needs), your Council appointed a committee to report on the proposal. Their labours are already concluded; the proposition has been accepted, but under stipulation for fulfilment of the following conditions by applicants for the grants:—

That the grants should be made for one year only in each case, though subject to renewal.

That the recipients be designated *Gilchrist Students* for the year in which the grants are made.

That no application for grants be received except it has been approved by the President and Council of any one of the six Societies—namely, the Royal, Astronomical, Chemical, Linnean, Geological, and Zoological; and that all applications be submitted to a committee, consisting of the Presidents of the six Societies together with the officers of the Royal Society, which committee shall recommend the applicants to the Gilchrist Trustees.

That a form of application be prepared setting forth the general objects of the Gilchrist Studentships, and the conditions upon which they are conferred.

That each student furnish, at the end of the year for which the grant is made, a report of his progress and results, signed by himself and countersigned by the President of the Society through which the application was transmitted.

Simple and acceptable as such a scheme appears, it may prove by no means always smooth in the working. It will be easy to find subjects, and candidates too; but the trustees must not expect in every case a full annual harvest for what they annually sow, or that some of the seed will not be productive of a crop of good intentions rather than good fruits. Putting aside all the temptations to procrastination that pre-payment fosters, there is the fact that every subject of scientific research presents a labyrinth in which the investigator may wander further and further from the main gallery, always following some tempting lateral track leading to discovery, but never after reaching the end of it or getting back to that which he set out to follow.

We must, however, hope for the best results from so munificent an endowment of scientific research, and watch with the deepest interest the progress of an experiment, the means for instituting which, after being urgently called for from the Government and our Universities, are now forthcoming from private resources.

The Wintringham Bequest.—Hitherto this curious bequest has, so far as the Society is concerned, proved alike profitless and troublesome, as will appear from a few particulars of its history.

Sir Clifton Wintringham, Bart., a Fellow and son of a Fellow of this Society, died at Hammersmith, January 10th, 1794, and bequeathed 1,200/- Three per Cent. Consols (payable twelve months after the decease of his wife) to the Royal Society, subject to the condition that within one month of the payment of the annual dividends in each year the President should fix on the subjects for three essays in Natural Philosophy or Chemistry, and submit them to the Society to be adopted by secret ballot. The subjects were then to be advertised in the papers of London, Paris, and the Hague: the essays were to be sent to the Royal Society within ten months of date of advertisement, each author to deliver ten copies; and the President and nine members of Council were to choose the best, and then to have made a silver cup of 30/- value, to be presented to the successful essayist on the last Thursday in December. In case of failure the dividends were to be paid to the treasurer of the Foundling Hospital.

Lady Wintringham died in 1805; but the Royal Society heard nothing of the bequest until 1839, when steps were taken to obtain possession of the fund. The Foundling Hospital put forward their claim; legal proceedings were taken, costs being paid out of accumulated dividends; and in 1842 the Royal Society were put in possession of the 1,200/- stock. Owing to the essential difficulties of carrying out the conditions of the testator's will, the dividends have ever since been paid to the Foundling Hospital.

The Council, desirous that those difficulties should be overcome, have, at different times appointed a committee to examine the question and suggest, if possible, a solution; but no satisfactory conclusion has yet been arrived at.

The Handley Bequest.—Mr. Edwin Handley, of Old Bracknell, Berks, was a country gentleman, and the possessor of a considerable landed and personal estate in Berkshire and Middlesex. He died in 1843, having bequeathed the bulk of his

property, after the decease of his two sisters, to the Royal Society.

The last of these ladies died in 1872, since when certain legal formalities have been complied with, and the claims of the Royal Society to the landed estates under the Mortmain Act have been brought before the Court. In February last the Master of the Rolls decided that "the gifts to the Royal Society, so far as they relate to pure personality, are good charitable gifts, but otherwise void." The personality as set forth in the "Bill of Complaint," comprises 6,933*l.* 7*s.* 5*d.* Three per Cent. Consols, 1,904*s.* 17*s.* 2*d.* Reduced, and 41*s.* 18*s.* 5*d.* Bank of England Stock.

By the terms of the will, the Society is to preserve the property intact in value, as a Fund Principal, the income of which is to be applied to the rewarding inventions in art, discoveries in science, physical or metaphysical ("which last and highest branch of science," to quote the testator's words, "has been of late most injuriously neglected in this country"), or for the assistance of fit persons in the prosecution of inventions and discoveries. The rewards or assistance are to be granted annually, or after longer periods, to British subjects or foreigners, according to the impartial decision of the President and Council.

A delay in distributing the bequest has arisen from the absence of a party on whom it was essential to serve a decree; this has, however, been now served, and there is every reason to believe that the suit will go forward; in which case we may hope to receive the proceeds early next year.

*The Dircks Bequest.*—Mr. Henry Dircks, of Liverpool, and latterly of London, who died in 1872, has bequeathed the residue of his property (about 4,000*l.*) after payment of debts and charges, to the Royal Society, Royal Society of Literature, Chemical Society, and Royal Society of Edinburgh, in equal shares and proportions, in furtherance of their several objects. As, however, it is possible that certain claims to the residue under the Bankruptcy Act, dating from 1847, may be set up, we are advised that the estate cannot be administrated without the aid of the Court of Chancery, which has been appealed to accordingly.

*The Ponti Will.*—Lastly, it is my duty under this head to inform you that our secretary has received a communication from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to the effect that the late M. Girolamo Ponti, of Milan, has bequeathed a portion of his immense property to the "Academy of Science of London." As, however, it does not appear what Society is indicated under this title, and as the relatives of the testator intend to dispute the will, the Council, as at present advised, will take no steps in the matter. I have further to observe that under the terms of the will, the Academy of Science will, if it accepts the trust, be burdened with annual duties and responsibilities respecting the distribution of the proceeds which would be altogether inconsistent with the position and purposes of the Royal Society.

*The Fairchild Lecture.*—This lecture no longer appears in the annual financial statement of your treasurer. Though an obvious anachronism and regarded almost from the first with little sympathy either within or without our walls, it should not pass away without a notice from the Chair. In February 1728 Thomas Fairchild, of Hoxton, gardener, bequeathed 25*l.* to be placed at interest for the payment of 20*s.* annually for ever for preaching a sermon in the parish church of St. Leonard's on Tuesday in Whitsun week on "the wonderful works of God in the creation, or on the certainty of the resurrection of the dead proved by certain changes of the animal and vegetable parts of the creation." From 1733 to 1758 most of the lectures were read by Archdeacon Denne, one of the original trustees, who in 1746 contributed all his lecture-fees to the fund, which, with a subscription raised by the trustees, enabled them in 1746 to purchase 100*l.* South Sea Stock. Subsequently this stock was offered to and accepted by the Society: the transfer was made in 1757; and from that date the lecturers were appointed by the President and Council. The lectures have been regularly delivered, but of late years to empty pews, under which circumstances the Council, after full deliberation, unanimously resolved that it was desirable to relieve the Society from the Fairchild Trust, and that to this end application should be made to the Charity Commissioners. The regular forms having been gone through, the Trust was transferred to the Commissioners in November last, and thus disappears from our balance-sheet.

The Croonian and Bakerian lectures are given annually as

usual; and those of this year appear in our Proceedings. These do not diminish in interest and importance.

*The Davy Medal.*—The Council has accepted the duty of annually awarding a medal, to be called the Davy Medal, for the most important discovery in chemistry made in Europe or Anglo-America. The history of this medal is as follows:—

Our former illustrious president, Sir Humphry Davy, was presented by the coalowners of this country with a service of plate, for which they subscribed 2,500*l.*, in recognition of his merits as inventor of the Safety Lamp. In a codicil to his will Sir Humphry left this service of plate to Lady Davy for her use during her life, with instructions that after her death it should pass to other members of the family, with the proviso that, should they not be in a situation to use or enjoy it, it should be melted and given to the Royal Society, to found a medal to be awarded annually for the most important discovery in chemistry, anywhere made in Europe or Anglo-America.

On Sir Humphry's death the service of plate became the property of his brother, Dr. John Davy, F.R.S., who, in fulfilment of Sir Humphry's intentions, bequeathed it after the death of his widow, or before if she thought proper, to the Royal Society, to be applied as aforesaid. On the death of Mrs. Davy the plate was transferred to the custody of your treasurer, and, having been melted and sold, realised 736*l.* 8*s.* 5*d.*, which is invested in Madras guaranteed railway stock, as set forth in the treasurer's balance-sheet. The legacy duty was repaid to the Society by the liberality of the Rev. A. Davy and Mrs. Rolleston.

The style and value of the medal, and the steps to be taken in reference to its future award, are now under the consideration of the Council, and will, I hope, be laid before you on the next anniversary. The acceptance of the trust has not been decided upon without long and careful deliberation, nor without raising the question of the expediency of recognising scientific services and discoveries by such trivial awards as medals, and of the extent to which the awards entrusted to our Society are depreciated by their multiplication. My own opinion has long been that some more satisfactory way of recognising distinguished merit than by the presentation of a medal might be devised, and that the award might take a form which would convey to the public a more prominent and a more permanent record of the services of the recipients, such as a bust or a portrait to be hung on our walls, or a profile or a record of the discovery to be engraved on the medal, which might be multiplied for distribution or sale to Fellows and to foreign Academies. In short, I consider awards of medals without distinctive features to be anachronisms; it is their purpose, not their value, which should be well marked; and the question is, whether that purpose is well answered by their being continued under the present form.

*Instruments.*—The small but remarkable, and, indeed, classical collection of instruments and apparatus belonging to the Society, and for which there was no accommodation in old Burlington House, was, on our migration from Somerset House in 1857, by order of the Council, deposited in the Observatory in the Kew Deer-Park, near Richmond, then under the control of the British Association.

The instruments have been now for the most part brought back and placed in our instrument-room, and will, I hope, at no distant period be accessible to the Fellows.

#### SCIENTIFIC SERIALS

*Cosmos*, Guido Cora's Italian Geographical Journal, Nos. 4 and 5 (in one), contains a long and carefully compiled article on Italian travellers in Egypt from 1300 to 1840; Payer and Weyprecht's official account of the Austro-Hungarian Arctic Expedition; and the continuation of F. M. Prsevalski's exploration of Eastern Mongolia and Thibet. There are, besides, Notes on Gordon's Nile Expedition,—an Austrian naturalist, Ernst Marno, has been appointed to accompany Col. Gordon; there is a short account of the travels of a Persian youth, Abdul Kerim, in Tunisia. The part contains an excellent map of the border region between Persia and Beluchistan, compiled from the maps of Major St. John and the English Admiralty.

#### SOCIETIES AND ACADEMIES

LONDON

*Anthropological Institute*, Dec. 22.—Prof. Busk, F.R.S., president, in the chair.—Mr. J. Park Harrison exhibited tracings of late Phœnician characters from the south-west of